



LEWIS & CLARK CITY-COUNTY Health Department

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East Helena Lead Education and Assistance Program

LEAD HAZARDS FROM RELOADING OR CASTING BULLETS, SHOT AND OTHER OBJECTS

According to a paper by the Michigan State University College of Human Medicine there are several precautions you should take when reloading or casting your own bullets and shot.

Establish a smelt/cast/reload area:

- **Preferable location is outdoors or, if you must do this indoors,** make sure your location is a separate area away from kitchen or food handling or storage.
- **Do this on hard floors, without carpet,** and surfaces that are easy to clean. Make some floor sweeping compound (sawdust, peat, or dry dirt with an oil to make it clumpy, not wet. Dust it on the floor to catch the lead dust and keep it from getting back up in the air.)
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- **Use lots of ventilation that exhausts** air up and out, not around the room. A box or desk fan is just as bad as poor ventilation. Do not use home air systems which blow dust throughout the home.
- **Never eat, drink, chew gum or smoke** or have these items in the area. Lead will settle on these objects and you will eat or inhale the dust.
- **Use rubber gloves and dust mask** with special filters for lead when handling solid lead ingots, bullets and dross. Store dross in a closed container.
- **Melt lead below 900°F**
- **Do not sweep dry floors. Use a shop-vac with HEPA filter** to vacuum up your area and your clothes once you are done. Don't use this vacuum for anything else. DO NOT use the house vacuum.
- **Wipe down your work areas after casting** with a damp disposable cloth or mop, using a two bucket system to keep wash water separate from rinse water.
- **Keep children and women of childbearing age clear** of this smelting/casting/reloading area. Children are more likely to come in contact with dust and get it in their mouths.
- **Launder clothing** worn during casting or reloading separate of other laundry.
- **Shower off after smelting or casting.** Be sure to wash your hair too. Always wash hands after handling lead, particularly before eating or smoking cigarettes.

Know Lead Content of Components for Firearm Ammunition:

Primers that are lead-free are available, but the majority still contains lead. New and spent primers are potential source of lead contamination. The yellow dust found in the priming station is a toxic lead compound. Do not use a can of compressed air to blow off the dust, clean affected parts with a disposable towel, dampened with cleaner. Wash lead residue from your hands and avoid inhaling fine dust from new or used primers.

Tumble cleaning brass cases is a common practice. The inside of the case contains lead compounds that are removed by the cleaning media and can become airborne when sifting during brass separation. Particles become airborne, settle on adjacent surfaces and require you to follow safe lead practices in this process, as well. Replace cleaning media when it starts to become gray, don't sift brass through an open colander, use a covered rotating basket style separator and always keep the lid closed while basket is spinning allow the dust to settle in the basket before removing the lid.

Remember: Lead builds up in the body so any reduction in lead intake will help prevent lead poisoning.

If you have additional questions or would like more information on a particular lead issue, feel free to call Jan or Debb at the Lead Education and Assistance Program (457-8583) or stop by their office at East Helena City Hall, 306 E. Main.